

---

## White snakeroot *Eupatorium rugosum*



Perennial herb, 0.6 to 1.5 m tall, with erect branched or unbranched stems arising from a mat of fibrous roots. Leaves opposite, simple, ovate, 3.5 to 17 cm long, 2.5 to 11 cm wide, crenate to serrate. Flowers showy, white, borne in open, terminal clusters, blooming late in summer or fall. Easily confused with near relatives that are not poisonous. Positive identification may re-

quire the services of a trained botanist. Probably found in all southern states east of the Mississippi River except perhaps Mississippi, rare in the southern portion of the region and at lower elevations; in rich, moist, open, deciduous woods or bordering streams.

### Toxicity

The toxic principle has been identified as an alcohol called tremetol. It is found in all parts of the plant whether green or dry. All domestic livestock, some laboratory animals, and humans are susceptible to the effects of this plant. Animals may be poisoned from consuming the actual plant or from ingesting milk from cows, sheep, or mares that have eaten the plant. Drinking milk from cows that have eaten white snakeroot has accounted for an illness called “milk sickness” and for deaths in humans.

### Symptoms

Trembling is the most common symptom; in fact, this condition has been called “trembles.” Animals are stiff and sluggish, stand with feet wide apart, and may eventually become recumbent. Slobbering, vomiting, constipation, and dribbling of urine also occur. The breath has a ketone odor. Humans may exhibit delirium after drinking toxic milk.

### Treatment

There is no specific treatment. Provide laxatives for some relief.